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FM AMCONSUL MONTERREY
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2557
INFO RUEHME/AMEMBASSY MEXICO PRIORITY 3406
RUEHXC/ALL US CONSULATES IN MEXICO COLLECTIVE
RUEHWH/WESTERN HEMISPHERIC AFFAIRS DIPL POSTS
RUEHMC/AMCONSUL MONTERREY 7874
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UNCLAS SECTION 01 OF 02 MONTERREY 000947

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E.O. 12958: N/A
TAGS: KPAO TINT SOCI ECON MX
SUBJECT: NEW MEDIA IN MEXICO: A RISING FORCE

MONTERREY 00000947 001.2 OF 002

¶1. SUMMARY: Since the introduction of the internet in Mexico in
1992, internet usage has grown exponentially among government,
business and private individuals. While poverty, lack of
education and regional insufficiencies in telecommunications
infrastructure inhibit internet use, more and more Mexicans –
especially educated, middle-class young adults -- are using
e-mail, chat rooms, instant messaging, web cams, blogs and
social networking. Internet journalism is growing in Mexico
also -- in the future, engagement with new media will be an
important aspect of public diplomacy in Mexico. Mission Mexico
will report on the Mission's new media outreach efforts septel.
END SUMMARY.

BEGINNINGS OF THE INTERNET IN MEXICO

¶2. In 1992, the internet was first introduced in Mexico by
MEXNET A.C. In the following years, MEXNET began developing its
internet services and in 1994 launched an experimental home
page. MEXNET was a university-based organization with the
participation of, among others, the University of Guadalajara,
the University of the Americas, the Technological Institute of
Mexicali, and the Technological Institute of Monterrey. Its
primary focus was to establish a national internet network, and
to create a culture of internet use. As was the case in the
U.S., engineering departments were the first to adopt the
internet in Mexican universities. Social sciences and humanities
took much longer.

GOVERNMENT ACTIVE ON INTERNET

¶3. Generally, public-sector internet initiatives were slow to
develop in the 1990's, but government use of the internet has
progressed considerably since then. According to data compiled
by the Mexican National Institute of Statistics, Geography and
Informatics (INEGI), as of 2000, 94 percent of central
government agencies and 75 percent of state agencies were using
the internet to provide services and information to the public.
Since 2001, dot.gov.mx domain registrations have grown an
average of 25.5 percent per year and now number over 180,000.

¶4. Now, the national government and most state and local
governments have caught up, and in some ways even surpassed, the
business and university sectors. Every Mexican state has a web
site and many have multiple web sites representing different
state government agencies. For instance, in the off-the beaten
path state of Zacatecas, it is possible to request vital records
(birth, marriage, and death certificates) via the web. Indeed,
virtually every major Mexican city government has a web site, as

do a large number of smaller cities and towns. The Mexican
government is now also working to broaden public computer and
internet access by setting up "digital community centers" in
cities and towns throughout the country. The Mexican government
initiated the e-Mexico project in 2001, with the goal of linking
10,000 communities to the internet by 2006. According to the
e-Mexico web site, there were about 7,200 digital community
centers throughout the nation as of 2005.

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PRIVATE INTERNET USE VARIED, GROWING
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¶5. In Mexico, netizens or cybercitizens spend an average of
about two-and-a-half hours a day navigating the internet. Most
netizens are middle-class or upper-class young adults who have a
college or post-graduate degree. Mexico's Federal
Telecommunications Commission estimates there were about 14
million internet users (13.2 percent of Mexico's population) as
of 2004. The International Telecommunication Union estimates
that in 2006, there were 16.9 internet users per 100
inhabitants. This compares to 15.21 for Venezuela, 14.49 for
Colombia, 25.23 for Chile and 22.55 for Brazil. Political,
economic and cultural information (as well as sports and
entertainment) are the most sought-after types of information on
the internet in Mexico. In addition to e-mail and internet
navigation, Mexican netizens use technologies such as chat
rooms, instant messaging, and web cams. Also, many Mexican
internet users have enough of a basic grasp of English to use
technologies and software not yet translated into Spanish.
While trends such as blogging and social networking are not as
developed as in the United States, they are taking hold in
Mexico. The Mexican blog directory site, "Blogs Mexico," lists
2,887 Mexican web logs, an increase from 436 about a year ago.

¶6. Most Mexican home internet users access the internet through
a dial-up modem to a local ISP, but broadband services are
expanding throughout most of the country. One of the principal
barriers to broadband expansion is its cost - USD 35.10 per

month for mid-range broadband access, plus a USD 57.80
subscriber charge and a USD 50.30 installation fee - a figure
beyond the reach of many working-class households. The number
of users who access the internet from home - a key indicator of
overall internet development - is still quite small and growth
in home internet use (19 percent from 2000-2004) is slower than
in any other category. (The overall user growth rate from
2000-2004 was 24 percent.) In 2000, slightly more than half of
all Mexican internet users accessed the internet from home; in
2004, it was only 39 percent. According to Mexico's Federal
Telecommunications Commission (COFETEL), about 5.5 million
Mexicans access the internet from home. This amounts to
slightly more than five percent of Mexico's total population.

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TECHNOLOGY, INCOME GAPS = LESS INTERNET
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¶7. Another factor affecting internet use is the huge technology
gap within Mexico. For example, the industrially developed
state of Nuevo Leon has more than six times the bandwidth and
infrastructure of the state of Chiapas, and Baja California has
more than four times Chiapas' bandwidth and infrastructure.

¶8. Poverty also inhibits internet access for millions of
Mexicans. Data collected by the consulting firm Select Mexico
(2004) show a wide disparity in internet use that corresponds to
income disparities. The analysis divides Mexico's populace into
three income classes. The bottom third consists of about 73
percent of the Mexican population. Select found that only about
17 percent of this group uses the internet. By contrast, Select
found that 46 percent of the upper income group, a group which
makes up about 13 percent of the total population, uses the
internet.

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INTERNET JOURNALISM HAS ARRIVED
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¶9. Internet journalism in Mexico, while not as widespread as in
countries such as South Korea, Japan and the U.S., is growing.
The increase in online journalism has been a response to the
perceived need to disseminate information more quickly than can
be done with traditional media. To date, there exist more than
157 online newspapers, 21 online radio stations, and 10 online
television channels in Mexico. The internet is currently the
most studied of all media by Mexican researchers, (followed by
TV). Some of the specific analyses on the changes that the .com
revolution has brought about to journalism focus on the
transformation of the professional journalist profile: now, more
than ever, professional journalists have to be technologically
adept, and internet savvy.

¶10. COMMENT: Our research and observations indicate that Mexico
occupies the middle tier in terms of level of use of information
technology. While many of the poor and those in isolated
regions do not have internet access, Mexico continues to develop
its information technology infrastructure. The number of home
internet users is significant and growing, and increasing
numbers of businesses and organizations have a presence on the
web. Perhaps the most surprising change is how the Mexican
government is using the web to make itself more accessible and
transparent. In a nutshell, more and more people are getting
their information from the web, and more and more institutions
are offering information on the web. In this environment, we
can only expect that internet journalism will also continue to
grow. As that happens, our public diplomacy efforts here will
have to include an ever greater emphasis on engaging and
monitoring the new media. END COMMENT.
WILLIAMSON